

IN THE CLAIMS:

Amended claims follow:

1. – 22. (Cancelled)

23. (Currently Amended) A method for enhancing network throughput between an internal network and an external network to which a server is connected, comprising the steps of:

- connecting two or more firewalls to the internal network;
- determining whether a common TCP control block exists for a TCP connection between one of said firewalls and the server, and creating one if one does not exist;
- sending a TCP connection request to the server from one of said firewalls; and
- updating said common TCP control block based on the response from the server to said TCP connection request;

wherein said steps further comprise establishing a connection between said firewall and said server, and updating said common TCP control block with connection state data during said connection;

wherein said steps further comprise shutting down said connection, and updating said common TCP control block based on the type of shutdown performed;

wherein said common TCP control block is shared with one or more of said other firewalls.

24. – 27. (Cancelled)

28. (Currently Amended) A method for enhancing network throughput between an internal network and an external network to which a server is connected, comprising the steps of:

- connecting two or more firewalls to the internal network;
- receiving a TCP connection request from the server to one of said firewalls;
- determining whether a common TCP control block exists for a TCP connection between said receiving firewall and said server, and creating one if one does not exist; and
- updating said common TCP control block based on the TCP connection request from the server;

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wherein said steps further comprise transmitting an acknowledgement and a request for connection to the server, and updating said common TCP control block with the resulting connection state data;

wherein said steps further comprise establishing a connection between said firewall and the server and updating said common TCP control block during said connection with connection state data;

wherein said steps further comprise shutting down said connection, and updating said common TCP control block based on the type of shutdown performed;

wherein said common TCP control block is shared with one or more of said other firewalls.

29-35. (Cancelled)

36. (Currently Amended) A computer program product embodied on a computer readable medium for enhancing network throughput between an internal network and an external network to which a server is connected, comprising:

computer code for connecting two or more firewalls to the internal network;

computer code for determining whether a common TCP control block exists for a TCP connection between one of said firewalls and the server, and creating one if one does not exist;

computer code for sending a TCP connection request to the server from one of said firewalls; and

computer code for updating said common TCP control block based on the response from the server to said TCP connection request;

wherein a connection is established between said firewall and said server, and said common TCP control block is updated with connection state data during said connection;

wherein said connection is shut down, and said common TCP control block is updated based on the type of shutdown performed;

wherein said common TCP control block is shared with one or more of said other firewalls.

37. (Cancelled)

38. (Currently Amended) A computer program product embodied on a computer readable medium for enhancing network throughput between an internal network and an external network to which a server is connected, comprising:

- computer code for connecting two or more firewalls to the internal network;
- computer code for receiving a TCP connection request from the server to one of said firewalls;
- computer code for determining whether a common TCP control block exists for a TCP connection between said receiving firewall and said server, and creating one if one does not exist; and
- computer code for updating said common TCP control block based on the TCP connection request from the server;
- wherein an acknowledgement and a request for connection is sent to the server, and said common TCP control block is updated with the resulting connection state data;
- wherein a connection is established between said firewall and the server, and said common TCP control block is updated during said connection with connection state data;
- wherein said connection is shut down, and said common TCP control block is updated based on the type of shutdown performed;
- wherein said common TCP control block is shared with one or more of said other firewalls.

39. (Cancelled)

40. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for enhancing network throughput between an internal network and an external network to which a server is connected, comprising:

- logic for connecting two or more firewalls to the internal network;
- logic for determining whether a common TCP control block exists for a TCP connection between one of said firewalls and the server, and creating one if one does not exist;
- logic for sending a TCP connection request to the server from one of said firewalls; and
- logic for updating said common TCP control block based on the response from the server to said TCP connection request;
- wherein a connection is established between said firewall and said server, and said common TCP control block is updated with connection state data during said connection;

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wherein said connection is shut down, and said common TCP control block is updated based on the type of shutdown performed;

wherein said common TCP control block is shared with one or more of said other firewalls.

41. (Cancelled)

42. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for enhancing network throughput between an internal network and an external network to which a server is connected, comprising:

logic for connecting two or more firewalls to the internal network;

logic for receiving a TCP connection request from the server to one of said firewalls;

logic for determining whether a common TCP control block exists for a TCP connection between said receiving firewall and said server, and creating one if one does not exist; and

logic for updating said common TCP control block based on the TCP connection request from the server;

wherein an acknowledgement and a request for connection is sent to the server, and said common TCP control block is updated with the resulting connection state data;

wherein a connection is established between said firewall and the server, and said common TCP control block is updated during said connection with connection state data;

wherein said connection is shut down, and said common TCP control block is updated based on the type of shutdown performed;

wherein said common TCP control block is shared with one or more of said other firewalls.

43. (Cancelled)

44. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, wherein the external network includes the Internet.

45. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 28, wherein the external network includes the Internet.

46. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 36, wherein the external network includes the Internet.

47. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 38, wherein the external network includes the Internet.

48. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 40, wherein the external network includes the Internet.

49. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 42, wherein the external network includes the Internet.